

Every pregnancy has a story.
Whatever your story, you have Choices.



choices

Choices Islington

Annual Report and Financial Statements
31 December 2023

A company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales number 6517231
Registered charity number 1124209

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Introducing Choices

Our vision

For no-one in London to face a pregnancy crisis alone.

Our mission

To provide the gold standard of support for anyone facing a pregnancy crisis.

Our goal

To work with our clients to improve their resilience and ability to: cope with a pregnancy crisis, make their choices healthily, and to have confidence to face the future with hope.

We do this by equipping them practically and with skills to understand their thoughts and feelings, and to act congruently with their values.

We define a pregnancy crisis as including but not limited to: unplanned pregnancy, pregnancy loss, child separation, parenting under difficult circumstances.

Our values

Empathy: Standing alongside each other with warmth, care and respect

Resilience: Helping each other to build resilience and have hope for the future

Professionalism: Working to the highest professional standard

Our ethos

Choices is a Christian organisation, and so we believe that all people deserve to be treated with care, compassion, and respect, regardless of their faith, race, income, sexual orientation or employment status. We are not a campaigning organisation, and we do not have a political agenda. Rather, we offer a safe, hopeful, and empowering space to our clients, our partners and each other.

We work with women and families facing pregnancy crises – from unplanned pregnancy to pregnancy loss, child separation, and parenting under challenging circumstances – and we recognise that these can be sensitive issues. Abortion, particularly, can become a controversial issue that divides people in a polarising debate. We choose instead to unite people by meeting our clients at their point of need, and never passing judgement. Our goal is to provide counselling and practical support so those in crisis can reach a place of resilience and hope for the future.

All Choices staff and volunteers are appropriately trained and supervised to reflect our ethos. We're committed to working at the highest standards of excellence that we can and practice within all national legal frameworks and professional guidelines, including safeguarding and anti-discrimination legislation. We are organisational members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and adhere to the BACP ethical framework. We take seriously our responsibility to provide a non-directive space for our clients.

As a faith-based organisation, Choices reserves the right to apply occupational requirements to key counselling and leadership roles, to preserve the Christian ethos of our organisation in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Legal and Administrative Information

Company/Charity Name

Choices Islington (formerly Choices Confidential Pregnancy Advice)

Registered Charity Number

1124209

Registered Company Number

6517231

Registered Office

390 Caledonian Road

London

N1 1DN

Email

info@choicescharity.org

Telephone

020 7700 4475

Website

www.choicescharity.org

Trustees/Directors

Hannah Carter (Chair)

Tamsin Merchant (resigned in 2023)

Matt Davis (Treasurer)

Lizzie Osborne

Elizabeth Dulley (became Chair Jan 2024)

Chloe Selby (joined in 2023)

Ian Gambier (resigned in 2023)

Celia Wyatt (joined in 2023)

Damilola Makinde

John Wyatt (resigned in 2023)

Company Secretary

Sophie Guthrie-Kummer

Bankers

Charities Aid Foundation Bank

National Westminster Bank PLC

Independent Examiner

Christopher Clarke

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Our charitable aims

1. To reduce distress for individuals and couples facing an unplanned pregnancy and facilitate informed decision-making in a non-directive and compassionate manner.
2. To enable women and men troubled by abortion or other pregnancy loss concerns to address and start to resolve these issues through counselling.
3. To enable female offenders troubled by abortion, pregnancy, or other child loss/separation concerns to address and start to resolve these issues through counselling.
4. To support vulnerable mothers, including through provision of practical and emotional help with parenting.
5. To empower young and disadvantaged people, including offenders, to make healthy lifestyle choices in relationships and regarding sexual health and thereby reduce unplanned pregnancy (and sexually transmitted infection rates) and build self-esteem.



Public benefit

We have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aims and objectives and in planning our future activities. In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

How we accomplish our goal:

Our counselling and practical services focus on empowering our clients as they build their own resilience to handle adversity and face the future with hope following a pregnancy crisis – from abortion to child separation or loss, or parenting in difficult circumstances.

We have three main outputs – Counselling, Practical Parenting Support and Signposting – which form the basis of our services to our clients:

1. A free crisis service for those facing the dilemma of an unplanned pregnancy
2. Low-cost counselling for up to six months for those struggling following a decision to terminate a pregnancy or following a pregnancy loss. And for those with mental health concerns during pregnancy, we offer counselling through the perinatal period, including postnatally.
3. Free counselling for female offenders in three women's prisons and post-release for up to six months around the same issues of pregnancy crisis, loss and child separation and child loss.
4. Parenting support:
 - One-to-one befriending with a trained befriender for pregnant and new mums
 - A free loan of baby clothes and equipment in the Choices Boutique (open to families of under 5s)
 - Parenting courses focused on building secure attachment relationships for families of under 5s
5. Signposting – supporting and helping all clients to feel more confident to access other relevant services – occurs at all levels of our services.

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Our Impact in 2023

502

Total Clients Supported

52

Unplanned Pregnancy Counselling

14

Perinatal Counselling

29

Pregnancy Loss Counselling

141

Prison and Post-Release Counselling

225

Boutique (baby clothes & equipment)

8

Befriending

33

Parenting Courses

171

Contacted Choices for information but did not attend a service

"They've gone above and beyond choosing beautiful pieces they thought I'd like and have done a brilliant job! They've been enthusiastic, really friendly and made me feel welcome and accepted as a person. This means so much to me ❤️ Even something as small as offering a drink made the experience so wonderful and personalized and I feel that I know where to turn to support if I need it in the future ❤️"

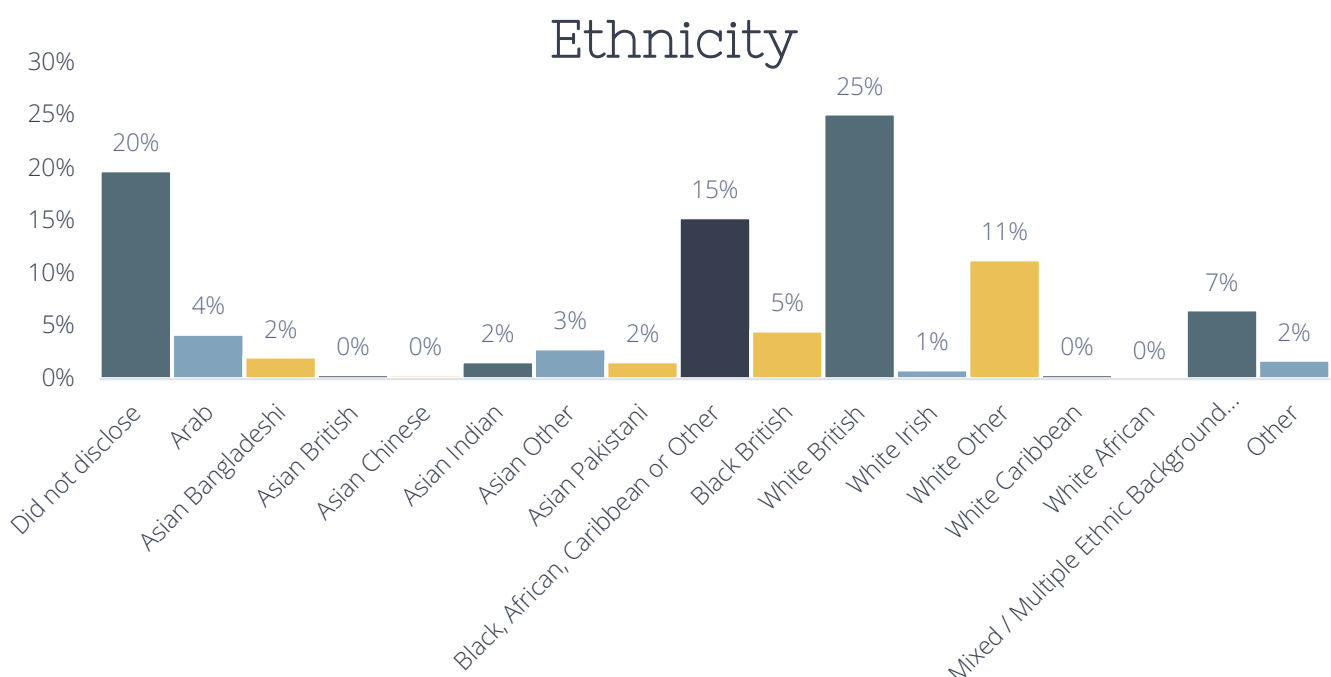
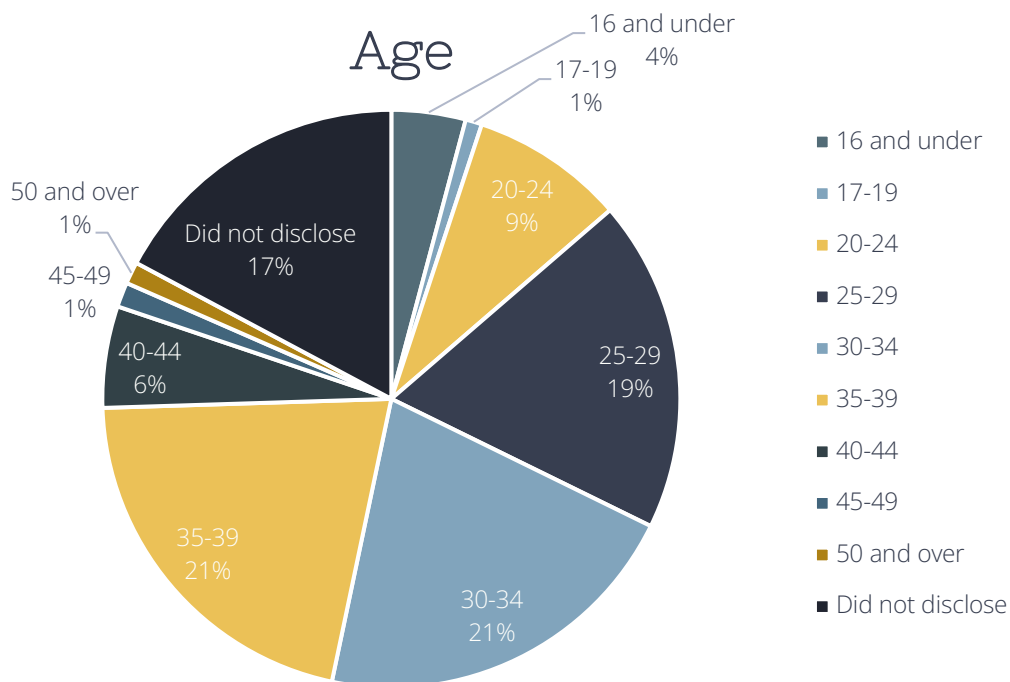
Boutique Client

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

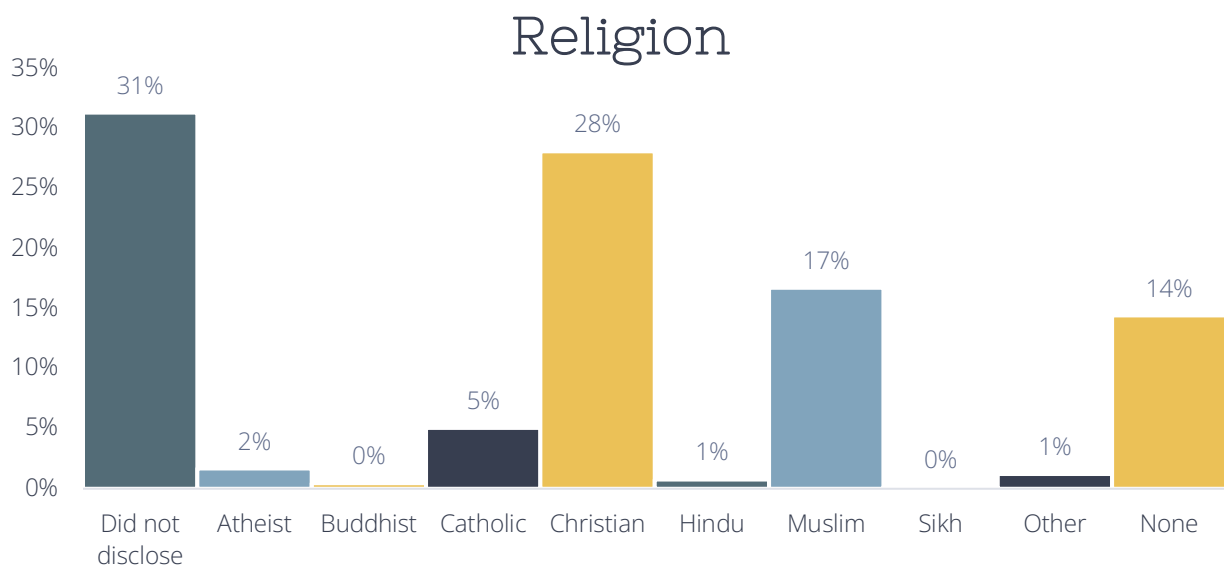
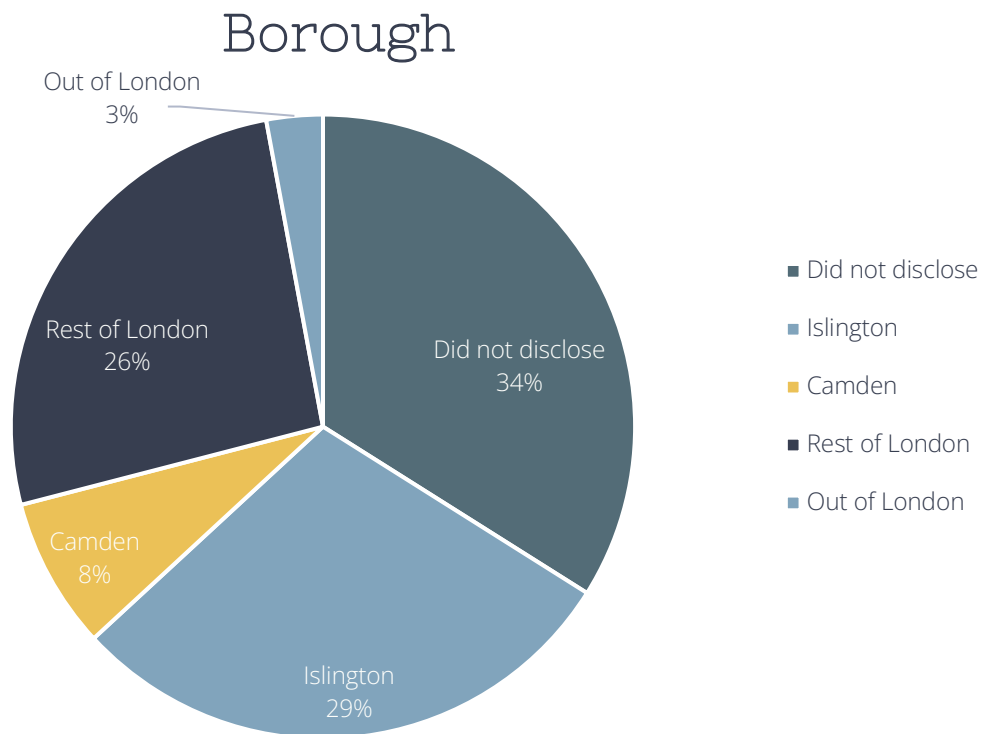
About our clients

Across all of our services, we see clients of all ages, but predominantly those aged between 20 and 40. Most of Choices' clients are women, but we do see some men, particularly parents accessing practical support and couples who come together to unplanned pregnancy sessions. We see clients from across London – and even from further afield, and sometimes internationally – although most are still from Islington and Camden where Choices has had its headquarters for more than 20 years. We do serve clients from all ethnicities, and all faith groups, as well as those with no faith. Some more work needs to be done to reach those from under-represented groups.



Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023



Monitoring & Evaluation

We monitor all our services using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Clients are asked at the beginning, middle and end to evaluate their agreement to statements using this scale. We then monitor how many give a score of 5 or 6 (a high level of agreement) at the end of counselling in response to key statements. For the ongoing counselling services, we also use NHS-approved psychometrics which indicate levels of anxiety and depression in clients before and after counselling. We measure the percentage change from beginning to end of all clients' scores cumulatively. These results are shared as a percentage for each service in the following pages.

About Choices' Counselling Services

Our counselling services enable clients to address their challenges, painful issues of loss and/or trauma and find healthy ways of processing their experiences, with the goal of increasing their resilience and ability to face future challenges.

All of our counsellors are qualified or are completing their training (registered with an accredited provider). Choices is an organisational member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

Unplanned Pregnancy Counselling

We offer clients facing the dilemma of an unplanned pregnancy a compassionate, caring, non-directive one-off session with a trained counsellor who will help them to consider their situation and to understand their thoughts and feelings. We provide a safe environment, and a fee-free session, so our clients can be empowered to make informed and internally resolved choices.

52

Clients Supported

48

One-off sessions

"Massive thanks for the session. [Our counsellor] was amazing, and it was exactly what my partner and I needed. She took us through the exercises in a great manner, helped us clarify our own thoughts and gave space to both of us. And at the end she had a perfect analysis of our situation, how we each felt, and what was blocking us from making a decision. I thought that was really impressive in 1.5 hours."

Unplanned Pregnancy Counselling

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Every year, our clients tell us how grateful they are to have found Choices at such a critical time in their lives. They also comment that they had no idea that this service existed. We are working hard to create links with other referrers to ensure more people are able to access this support at such a crucial time. This year we saw a number of clients as couples, which explains the higher number of clients than sessions.

As ever, some clients (this year 10 in total) made an appointment or got in touch, but for their own reasons – for example, they may have come to their decision – ultimately chose not to attend an appointment. We are conscious this is a very sensitive topic and can feel like a crisis for those experiencing it. We endeavour to respond rapidly (within 24 hours) to every query and offer an appointment within the next day or so. We also work hard to ensure clients are reassured they will be given space to explore their own feelings and thoughts, and will not be judged or coerced to make a decision.

70% felt equipped to face their situation and make a decision

73% were able to identify their feelings as a result of the session they had

70% were confident about their next steps

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Pregnancy Loss Counselling

This service supports women and men who are facing difficulties associated with pregnancy loss, particularly following an abortion. We offer 24 weekly sessions at low cost and work online and in person – which has widened our reach. The service is supported by trainee counsellors who have chosen to have their clinical placement with Choices, as well as members of staff. Each year a number of clients get in touch but then find they aren't ready for counselling and so do not take up the service but may return later in the year or sometimes years later. This year, four clients decided not to continue following their assessment with a counsellor. Sometimes, having a space to go through their experiences with someone who cares provides the support these clients were looking for at that point in their lives.

“Being able to talk freely to someone who listens and helps me find answers has given me the capability to be able to identify an emotion and deal with it accordingly. Some days are harder than others, but counselling has helped me realise that I shouldn't be that hard on myself.”

Post-Abortion Client

22 New Post-Abortion Clients Supported

6 New Post-Miscarriage Clients Supported

1 Ongoing Client from 2022 Supported

430 Sessions held in total with all clients

Report of the trustees

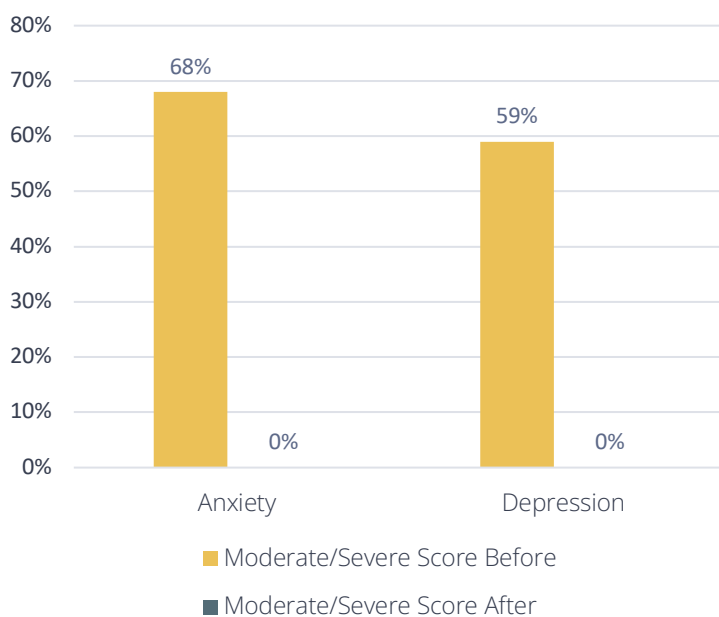
(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

86% are able to understand their emotions

100% feel significant and valuable

100% feel able to face future challenges

Pregnancy Loss Counselling Psychometrics



Most of our clients self-report as feeling depressed and anxious when they come to Choices. Increasingly, we are also seeing clients with pre-existing mental health diagnoses including Bi-Polar Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder/Complex trauma, OCD, PTSD, as well as anxiety disorders. Clients have also disclosed childhood sexual abuse, bullying and sexual assault.

Counselling continues to have a significantly positive impact. Using NHS approved psychometrics – GAD-7 and PHQ-9 scales for Anxiety and Depression respectively – we saw that from the start of counselling to the end, our clients' anxiety reduced by 68% and depression reduced by 59%.

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Perinatal Counselling

Our Perinatal Counselling service provides low-cost counselling to expectant parents and in some instances very new parents who are dealing with birth trauma or perinatal mental health concerns. We provide counselling throughout pregnancy until around 37 weeks where our counsellors negotiate a break. We then offer around six sessions of counselling in the first four months after birth. The offer is bespoke for each client, in recognition of the different experiences faced by each client.

17 Clients Supported

14 Clients receiving ongoing counselling

135 Sessions

This service supports women (and men) through a pregnancy that feels under pressure for any reason, or following a traumatic birth experience that is putting pressure on the early days of parenting. We support those who may face significant challenges but would not meet the threshold for perinatal support on the NHS which can only see the most complex cases. Over the course of the year, this service has grown from being a pilot to a fully-fledged service. Thanks to a grant from the Benefact Trust, we were able to recruit another counsellor to support the team one day per week for most of the year, and we recruited three placement counsellors to ensure we were able to meet demand. We aim to operate this service without a waiting list as pregnancy is already such a limited time and we don't want clients to wait any longer than absolutely necessary to access support.

We supported 14 clients in counselling over the year, and supported an additional three with an assessment, which provided enough 'holding' support for the time being. The cohort of clients accessing this service are often vulnerable and are not always able to take up this type of support once a week. In addition, nine clients got in touch with interest in the service, but chose not to take it up, which demonstrates our growing reach as a service.

Where during the pilot stage, most of our clients were referred via our unplanned pregnancy service, we have built relationships with referral partners such as Birth Companions, as well as statutory services (including mental health services and midwives) over the past year, and now see more clients referred from other services.

100% are able to understand their emotions

100% feel able to face future challenges

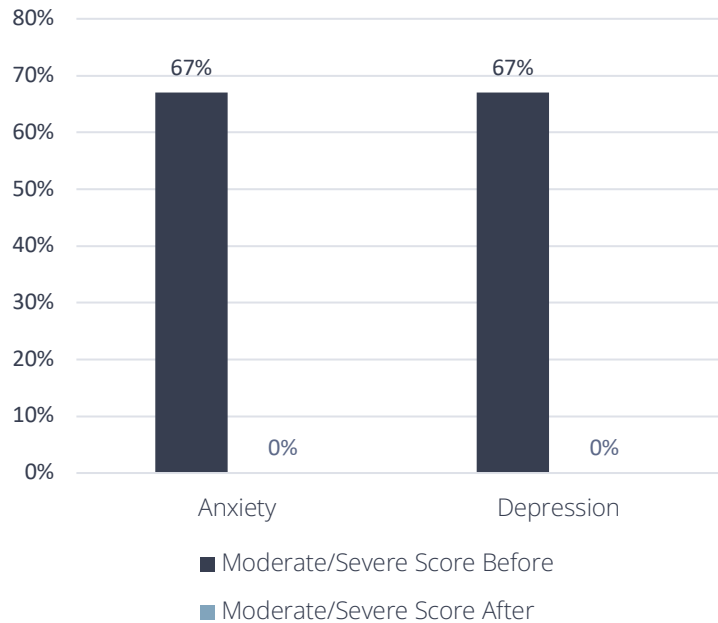
Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Many of our clients report that they feel anxious and depressed. When starting counselling 67% of our clients have psychometric scores suggesting they had moderate/severe levels of anxiety and depression. They come with presenting issues such as; unplanned pregnancy, relationship breakdown, financial challenges, domestic violence/ emotional & psychological abuse.

From our end evaluations, we can see that both anxiety and depression scores dropped by 67% to 0% from the beginning to the end of counselling which is a tremendous gain. However, it must be noted that the pool of clients who actually completed end evaluations was very small during the year so may not be representative and we are exploring other methods of gathering accurate data from this vulnerable and often very pressurised cohort of clients.

Perinatal Counselling Psychometrics



"[I appreciate the] space to explore what I am feeling, make sense of ...
[and] see the positives of my situation."

Perinatal Counselling Client

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Prison Counselling

Choices Prison Counselling supports female prisoners facing pregnancy loss, child bereavement and child separation concerns – abiding issues for women in prison. Hosted by the Mental Health Teams at HMPs Bronzefield, Downview and Send, this service entered a new phase at the end of 2022 when Choices was subcontracted to provide it by the CNWL NHS trust, which delivers healthcare to the women's prisons we work in. The counselling team has now grown to five members of staff and around eight volunteer counsellors each year, and is supported by two major grants, from City Bridge Trust and the National Lottery, as well as the NHS. We have also grown the post-release counselling element of this service with grant support for a new member of staff and were able to more than double the number of clients we saw last year.

New Clients Supported

48	Bronzefield	48	Downview
17	Send	28	Post-Release
1041	Sessions	35	Declined Support

Across the three prisons and post release, our Prison Counsellors worked with 176 clients last year including 35 clients who started support in 2022. We offer our clients a course of 24 sessions but sometimes due to factors such as transfers to other prisons or release, we do not manage to see them for the full number of sessions. Where we know the potential end date, we are able to contract for shorter periods of therapy. We are also able to offer brief therapy of one or two sessions to clients who are facing a difficult anniversary. Our evaluations show the positive impact counselling is having. For such a vulnerable group, most of whom experience multiple traumas in their lives, to show positive gains, is a real testament to the power of this service.

81% feel they can now be honest with themselves about their emotions

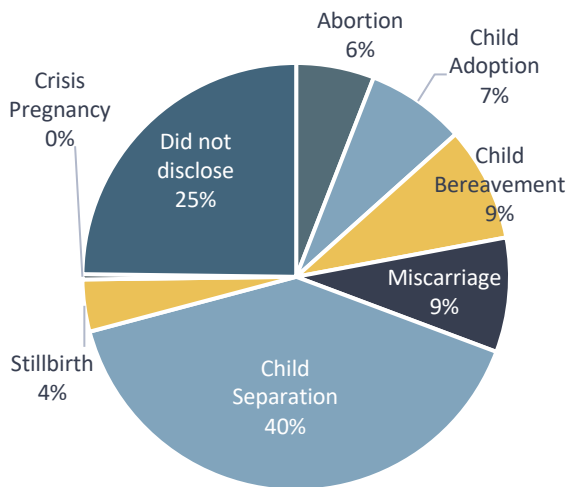
45% feel the counselling has improved their self-confidence

58% feel that counselling has helped them identify their strengths and good qualities

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

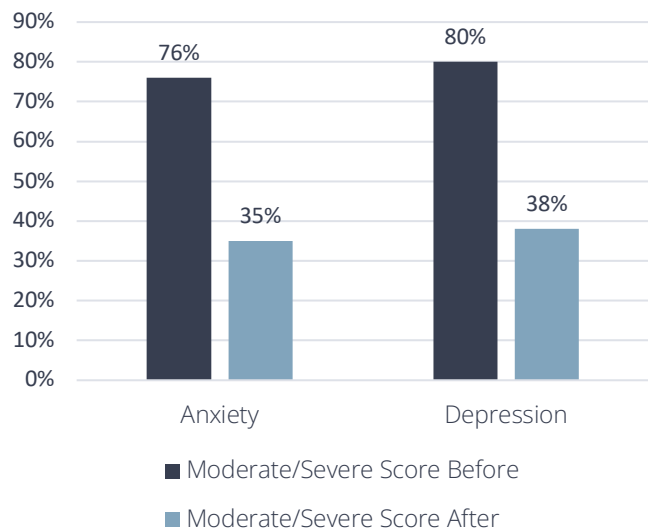
Referral Reason



The psychometric evaluations our clients filled out before and after counselling demonstrated a very positive experience of counselling. 76% of clients scored as having moderate and severe anxiety before and only 35% after, while 80% of clients had moderate to severe depression before, a figure that fell to 38% after. These are a fall of 41% and 42% respectively – huge gains for this very vulnerable client group.

Child separation is by far the largest referring issue we work with in the prison estate (40% of clients). At least 25% of the women we work with have experienced adverse childhood experiences such as sexual and domestic abuse and 35% have experienced abuse as an adult. The work that our service offers works directly with the consequences of these experiences.

Prison Counselling Psychometrics



Client A was seen for 10 sessions in Downview and was then transferred to Send where we picked her up and she has now referred herself for post release counselling. She said that it was the most consistent support she has had in her whole life.

Prison Counsellor

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

This service exists to support those who are parenting in adverse circumstances, such as on low income, in insecure housing, or single parenting. We offer a baby clothes and equipment service – the Choices Boutique – and parenting courses, as well as a befriending service for new parents.

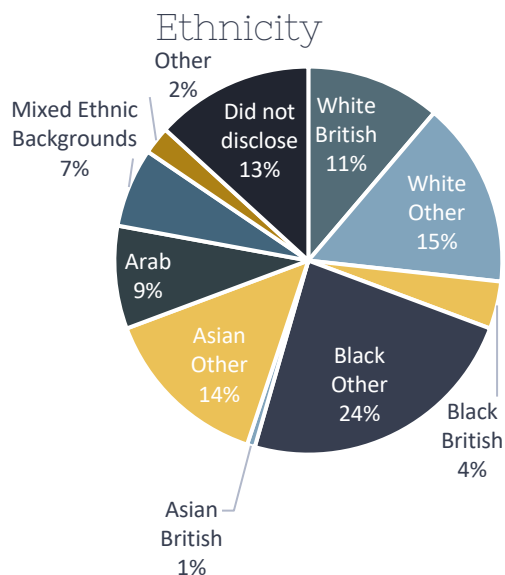
Boutique

The **Choices Boutique** is a baby and children's clothing and equipment bank. We receive donations of good quality, second-hand items and offer them to families who can use them. In its second year in a new location – a community building called Kings House run by a partner church (KXC) – the Boutique is open one day a week for appointments and we receive and sort donations on another day. This service has grown by more than 60 per cent in the last year – most probably driven by rising living costs leaving our clients with less disposable income for items for their children.

Sharing this community space at Kings House means we can work closely with our partners, including the KXC Little Haven baby and toddler group which also runs on Wednesdays, and Growing Hope, a charity which supports families with children with additional needs.

225 Clients Supported

275 Appointments



“The service was impeccable, I felt very welcomed from the moment I entered the building and not judged, I will be back in future and recommend to other mums I know are in need”

Boutique Client

Most of our clients are on low income, single parent families or struggling with mental health issues. Many of our clients are referred to us by Family Support Workers in Islington and Camden, or further afield, but a number self-refer because they need the extra support. The demographic of our clients attending Boutique appointments is very varied and we are pleased to be able to offer appointments within two weeks of referral.

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

96% felt accepted and supported by their Boutique advisor

86% feel more able to provide their child/ren with the clothing and equipment they need

94% know where to turn for further support

Befriending

Our **befriending** service supports new parents and parents-to-be by providing one-to-one weekly practical and emotional support with a trained befriender. While we were able to support eight clients across the year, we saw a reduction in the number of clients able to commit to befriending and are exploring how to help more pregnant and new mums to access the support if they would like to. We aim to increase the numbers of cross-referrals between Boutique, befriending and the parenting courses and are trialling next year having a befriending volunteer in the Boutique who can offer the service to the clients who attend.

"[My Befriender] supported me with applications I didn't really understand how to go about, and helped ... emotionally as whenever my befriender calls I can talk and share, and also physically by meeting up with me and my child for coffee. Mentally it helped knowing there is always someone to speak with if there is any sort of concern."

Befriending Client

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Parenting Courses

We continue to run **Circle of Security Parenting™ courses** in partnership with Growing Hope three times a year. Based on attachment theory, the course encourages parents and care givers to consider how to support their children's emotional needs. This year, we ran two additional courses – one for paying clients and one in partnership with a local GP surgery for parents who were referred. We are exploring how we can share this resource with a wider range of parents and are also asking for a paid contribution towards the costs of the course.

We continue to offer the course in a hybrid fashion with at least one in person and usually at least one in the evenings online to increase accessibility.

At the outset most parents say they feel quite confident with their parenting ability and skills, however, at the end of the course 100% of parents respond with scores of 5 and 6 (out of 6) to all the questions, and comment that they feel much more confident.

100% feel more able and equipped to understand and manage their child/ren's emotions

71% feel they can think about what their child's behaviour is telling them before reacting

100% feel more able and equipped to cope with challenges in parenting

"[The Parenting Course has been] really helpful and has given me more confidence to continue my parenting journey and feel I have a better understanding in how to continue to support my daughter and her additional needs."

Parenting Course Client

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Choices' business strategy in 2023 was to grow to meet the demand for our services, and to ensure growth is sustainable, backed up by organisational resilience. And with a 20% increase in client numbers over the course of the year and income growth of around a third, the strategy has been successful so far.

We are aiming for sustainable growth, however, and so have invested in our staff too. With a new Services Manager starting this year, the much-needed support for all operations and administration across the services that we have needed for years is finally in place, and we have invested in a greater level of training for staff who are seeing increasingly traumatised and complex clients. Full supervision for all staff has always been a priority, and the trustees were able to approve a new wellbeing policy for staff to encourage them to take wellbeing days though the year to look after themselves while they carry the weight of the work we do.

Focus Areas for 2024

Choices plans to grow sustainably in response to demand for our services. We define growth as: **Increased organisational resilience – being able to meet more clients while preserving staff wellbeing and without over-stretching our resources and people.**

We will do this by a combined focus on INCREASING INCOME (focus on individual gifts) and RAISING CHOICES' PROFILE (among donors and clients).

In 2024, these are our focus areas as we work towards these two goals:

- STAFF WELLBEING – ensuring all our staff are doing well to hold the weight of the work. This includes offering staff wellbeing days, increasing times of celebration with volunteers, good quality supervision and greater clarity on KPIs.
- QUALITY ASSURANCE – being able to demonstrate the quality of our work. This includes developing networks with professional bodies (e.g. BACP), increased training in responding to trauma, working towards a Trauma Informed Quality Mark for Choices, and continued focus on good governance.
- MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS – raising awareness about Choices and the support we offer among our client audience (building relationships with the statutory and voluntary sector) and our donor audience (clients and church networks). In Q1 of 2024, there will be a URL change to CHOICESCHARITY.ORG – a move planned for a number of years since clients began to question whether they could access support if they lived outside of Islington.
- FUNDRAISING – the need to ensure we are growing sustainably is crucial. Our grant funding target has risen and we must also increase our focus on individual giving, particularly regular donors. Plans to derive income from Circle of Security courses as a small part of the income diversification picture have not been realized and so the focus is on individual giving in the immediate term. To further professionalise our efforts, we worked with two freelance fundraising consultants and will employ an individual giving specialist through 2024 as maternity cover.

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Finance

Total incoming resources amounted to £390,232 for the year to 31 December 2023 (2022: £219,674). Total resources expended over the same period were £305,037 (2022: £226,961). The net position for the year amounted to a surplus of £85,196 (2022: deficit of £(7,287)). Net resources at the end of the year were £219,416, of which £28,856 is restricted and £23,067 is designated. Further details are found later in this report, including details of the grants we gratefully received in the year.

Choices is reliant on gifts from grant-making trusts and foundations, as well as individual and major donors. We would like to thank the following donors for their support in 2023:

The Anchor Foundation, Ako Foundation, All Souls Church, Benefact Trust, Borrows Charitable Trust, City Bridge Trust, Enterprise Development Fund, Henry Smith Foundation, Joan Ainslie Trust, John Lewis, KXC (Kings Cross Church), M & H Maunsell Charity, The Fitton Trust, The Leathersellers Company, National Lottery Community Fund, Schroder Charity Trust, The Souter Charitable Trust, St Mary's Hornsey Rise.

The charity holds its reserves in a current bank account and in a CAF deposit account which generates interest on monies invested. It is the policy of the Trustees to maintain at least three months' expenditure in reserve and up to nine months where it is deemed necessary. Where reserves are being held, these will be designated for a specific purpose (such as for specific training, or for laptops/capital projects, or in some circumstances, to pay for a salary). The financial management of the charity is supervised and monitored by the Finance Subcommittee of the Board and the Trustees.

Over the course of the last few years, we have received some unexpected large gifts from much-valued donors, some of whom have chosen to remain anonymous. We have also made some savings when, for instance, recruitment for key roles took longer than expected, or due to natural staff movement we have been able to restructure more efficiently. As a result, we have built up reserves which the trustees have chosen to designate towards much-needed improvements to the structure of the charity. In 2024, these funds are being put towards increasing our reach across north London, and towards addressing salaries and properly recompensing our staff as well and as transparently as we can sustainably, recognising that our staff are our key asset.

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

The people who make it happen

Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. The Trustees, who are also Directors of the charitable company, meet every three months to review progress and performance, monitor the financial position, monitor risk and make strategic decisions. The Trustees/Directors who served during the year and up to the date of this report are listed on page 3. New trustees are appointed by existing trustees of whom there should be a minimum of three. Trustees are selected for their individual skills, knowledge and vision. New trustees are appropriately trained and inducted.

Team

Choices is run by the Executive Director, who is accountable to the Board. The Executive Director manages all the project managers (who run our services) as well as a Services Manager and a Fundraising Manager. Other than the Services Manager, all staff are part-time, and each service is supported by volunteers. Over the course of 2023, we also worked with freelance consultants, namely our bookkeeper of several years and a grant fundraiser. Towards the end of the year, we also employed an individual giving freelance consultant and a social media consultant to support and develop this work while our fundraising manager is on maternity leave.

Volunteers

Choices continues to benefit from talented and committed volunteering and we have had around 30 volunteers again giving time across all our services, including offering administrative and communications support. Choices' goal is that volunteers should derive as much benefit from their work with the organisation as we derive from them. All of our counselling volunteers who are not fully trained use Choices as a placement opportunity as part of their counselling/psychotherapy training at reputable institutions accredited with registered professional bodies.

Governance

- The Trustees maintain a Risk Management policy, which is reviewed at least annually. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces.
- Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects.
- Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with the health and safety of staff, volunteers, clients and visitors. These procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity.
- The Trustees oversee Choices' compliance with GDPR legislation at every meeting, and adherence to the Charity Commission's Governance Code on an ongoing basis.
- A smaller finance sub-committee, which includes the Treasurer, Bookkeeper and Executive Director, meets before each meeting of the Trustees and examines financial progress on a monthly basis.
- The Trustees have been particularly concerned with exploring inclusion and broad representation at all levels of the organisation – from the Board, through staff and volunteers. We are continuing to explore ways of including user voice in programme development.
- No trustees claimed expenses this year.

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the surplus or deficit of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether the policies adopted are in accordance with the Companies Act 2006 and with the applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP): "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" issued in 2012. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. In determining how amounts are presented within items in the statement of financial activities and balance sheet, the Trustees must have regard to the substance of the reported transaction or arrangement, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles or practice.

Small company provisions and independent examination

For the year ending 31 December 2023, the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476. The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts. These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime. The Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011) and that an independent examination is needed. The Trustees have appointed Christopher Clarke ACA as Independent Examiner for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by;



Sophie Guthrie-Kummer

Executive Director and Company Secretary

29 February 2024

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

I report on the accounts of the company for the year ended 31 December 2023, which are set out on pages 24 to 31.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The Trustees (who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- To follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Christopher Clarke, ACA

16 April 2024

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Statement of financial activities

(incorporating the income and expenditure account)

for the year ended 31 December 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
		£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:	2				
Donations and legacies		154,471	152,032	306,503	181,727
Other fundraising activities		12,543	-	12,543	12,640
Income from investments		1,422	-	1,422	140
Income from charitable activities		69,597	-	69,597	25,166
Other income		167	-	167	
Total income and endowments		238,201	152,032	390,232	219,674
Expenditure on:	3				
Expenditure on Raising Funds		12,689	1,994	14,683	13,079
Expenditure on Charitable Activities		158,751	131,603	290,354	213,882
Total expenditure		171,440	133,597	305,037	226,961
Net income/(expenditure)		66,761	18,435	85,196	(7,287)
Opening balances brought forward		123,799	10,421	134,220	141,507
Total funds carried forward		190,560	28,856	219,416	134,220

All activities are continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses for the year and therefore no statement of total recognised gains and losses has been prepared.

The notes on following pages form part of these accounts.

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Balance Sheet

for the year ended 31 December 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2022 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible fixed assets	4	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-
Current assets					
Rent deposit	5	4,000	-	4,000	4,000
Accrued income and prepayments	5	14,073	-	14,073	2,667
Debtors	5	22,056	-	22,056	3,420
Cash at bank and in hand		157,701	30,271	187,972	159,348
		<u>197,830</u>	<u>30,271</u>	228,101	169,435
Liabilities					
Creditors-amounts falling due in 1 year	6	<u>(7,270)</u>	<u>(1,414)</u>	(8,685)	<u>(35,215)</u>
Net current assets		<u>190,560</u>	<u>28,856</u>	219,416	<u>134,220</u>
Total net assets		<u><u>190,560</u></u>	<u><u>28,856</u></u>	<u>219,416</u>	<u><u>134,220</u></u>
Funds of the charity					
Unrestricted	7			167,493	102,674
Designated				23,067	21,125
Restricted				<u>28,856</u>	<u>10,421</u>
				<u>219,416</u>	<u>134,220</u>

The company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 December 2023 and the members/guarantors have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006. The trustees/directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 16 April 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



Elizabeth Dulley

Chair of Trustees

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 December 2023

1. Accounting Principles

The principal accounting principles are summarised below and have been applied consistently throughout the year.

Basis of accounting

These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historical cost in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008), the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" (effective 1 January 2015), with Accounting Standards and with the Charities Act 2006.

Basis of preparation of accounts

These accounts have been prepared on the going concern basis.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees. Restricted funds can only be used for particular limited purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Incoming resources

Incoming resources are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities (SoFA) when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy and where it is confident that it will be received.

Performance related income is only included in the SoFA once the related services have been provided.

Deferred income

Grants and donations received in advance and specified by the donor as relating to specific future periods or subject to conditions which are still to be met, are deferred to the period to which they relate.

Tax reclaims on donations

Gift aid tax reclaims on donations are included in the SoFA in the same period as the donations to which they relate.

Volunteer services

The value of volunteer services received is not quantified in the accounts but is described in the trustees' report.

Investment income

Income from investments is included in the accounts in the period it is receivable.

Liability recognition

Liabilities are recognised as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to pay out resources.

Operating leases

Operating lease rentals are expensed on a straight-line basis over the period of the lease.

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 December 2023

2. Income

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2022 £
a Donations and legacies				
Donations	110,502	-	110,502	86,671
Grants from trusts	36,500	152,032	188,532	84,984
Gift Aid	7,470	-	7,470	10,072
	<u>154,471</u>	<u>152,032</u>	<u>306,503</u>	<u>181,727</u>
Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:				
Ako Foundation			-	5,000
Anchor Foundation		7,000	7,000	-
Arundell Trust			-	500
Barnabas Trust			-	1,600
Benefact Trust		9,725	9,725	3,775
Borrows Charitable Trust	7,000		7,000	1,000
City Bridge Trust		34,929	34,929	11,643
Enterprise Development Fund			-	11,550
Henry Smith Foundation	15,000		15,000	30,000
Joan Ainslie Trust	5,000		5,000	
Leathersellers	7,500		7,500	-
National Lottery Community Fund		97,378	97,378	19,916
Schroder		3,000	3,000	
Souter Charitable Trust	2,000		2,000	-
	<u>36,500</u>	<u>152,032</u>	<u>188,532</u>	<u>84,984</u>
b Other fundraising activities				
Donation for office space	12,543	-	12,543	12,640
c Income from investments				
CAF bank deposit interest	1,422	-	1,422	140
d Income from charitable activities				
Education practitioner training	85	-	85	-
Community counselling	8,258	-	8,258	5,166
Prison counselling income	61,255	-	61,255	20,000
e Other income	167	-	167	-
	<u>83,729</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>83,729</u>	<u>37,946</u>
Total incoming resources	<u>238,201</u>	<u>152,032</u>	<u>390,232</u>	<u>219,674</u>

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

3. Expenditure

a. by fund

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2022 £
Expenditure on Raising Funds				
Event costs	95	-	95	1,575
Fees and subscriptions	12,594	1,994	14,588	11,505
	12,689	1,994	14,683	13,079
Expenditure on Charitable Activities				
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total expenditure 2023 £	Total expenditure 2022 £
Bank charges	66	-	66	83
Bookkeeping costs	5,254	-	5,254	4,720
Charitable donation - Centres Network	-	-	-	-
Fees and subscriptions	2,482	300	2,782	2,621
Freelancer costs	-	-	-	-
Independent Examination costs	150	-	150	150
Insurance	656	191	847	883
Office expenses	5,313	283	5,596	2,412
Premises costs	20,776	10,110	30,886	22,818
Publicity	206	165	372	446
Resources	814	4,124	4,938	10,341
Staff costs	111,815	103,435	215,250	154,598
Staff development/training	4,451	5,665	10,116	3,964
Supervision costs	5,040	7,110	12,150	8,980
Telephone and communication	1,526	151	1,677	1,324
Volunteer expenses	201	70	270	542
	158,751	131,603	290,354	213,882
	-	-	-	-
Total Expenditure	171,440	133,597	305,037	226,961

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

b. Expenditure on Charitable Activities - by project

Charitable Activities	Community Counselling	Parenting Support	Prison Counselling	Central costs	Total Charitable Expenditure 2023
Bank charges	-	-	-	66	66
Bookkeeping costs	-	-	-	5,254	5,254
Fees and subscriptions	-	-	-	2,782	2,782
Independent examination costs	-	-	-	150	150
Insurance	-	-	-	847	847
Office expenses	-	-	-	5,596	5,596
Premises costs	-	-	-	30,886	30,886
Publicity	-	-	165	206	372
Resources	4,542	-	46	350	4,938
Staff costs	44,319	14,627	72,440	83,863	215,250
Staff development/training	-	-	5,665	4,451	10,116
Supervision costs	5,040	-	7,110	-	12,150
Telephone and communication	-	-	-	1,677	1,677
Volunteer expenses	103	-	70	98	270
Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities	54,004	14,627	85,495	136,227	290,354

Expenditure by project: previous year comparatives

Charitable Activities	Community Counselling	Parenting Support	Prison Counselling	Central costs	Total Charitable Expenditure 2022
Bank charges	-	-	-	83	83
Bookkeeping costs	-	-	-	4,720	4,720
Fees and subscriptions	-	-	-	2,621	2,621
Independent examination costs	-	-	-	150	150
Insurance	-	-	-	883	883
Office expenses	-	-	-	2,412	2,412
Premises costs	-	-	-	22,818	22,818
Publicity	-	50	-	396	446
Resources	-	1,937	130	8,275	10,341
Staff costs	23,317	20,160	49,168	61,952	154,598
Staff development/training	-	-	-	3,964	3,964
Supervision costs	4,020	-	4,960	-	8,980
Telephone and communication	-	-	-	1,324	1,324
Volunteer expenses	-	97	125	320	542
Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities	27,337	22,244	54,383	109,918	213,882

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

c. Employees

	2023	2022
Gross salaries and wages	200,428	145,014
Employer's National Insurance	10,686	6,671
Employer's pension contributions	4,136	2,913

There are no employees who received emoluments in excess of £60,000 (2022:nil).
Key management personnel comprise Sophie Guthrie-Kummer, Executive Director.

4. Tangible fixed assets

None to report.

5. Debtors, accrued income and prepayments

	2023	2022
Rent deposit	4,000	4,000
Accrued income	11,406	392
Prepayments	2,667	2,667
Debtors	19,406	362
Gift aid recoverable	2,651	2,666
	40,130	10,087

6. Creditors

	2023	2022
Amounts due within one year	4,500	627
Tax and pension contributions payable	4,184	3,386
Deferred income and accruals	-	31,202
	8,685	35,215

Report of the trustees

(incorporating the Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 December 2023

7. Movement of Funds

	Opening balance	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Closing balance
Unrestricted general funds	102,674	238,201	(168,632)	(4,750)	167,493
Designated funds	21,125	-	(2,808)	4,750	23,067
Total unrestricted funds	123,799	238,201	(171,440)	-	190,560
Restricted funds					
Boutique	-	12,991	(2,015)		10,976
Counselling	-	16,725	(16,725)		-
Enterprise Development	3,887	-	(3,887)		-
Parenting Support	-	-	-		-
Prison counselling	6,534	122,316	(110,969)		17,881
Total restricted funds	10,421	152,032	(133,597)	-	28,856
Total funds	134,220	390,232	(305,037)	-	219,416

Reasons for transfers: £4,750 was designated out of surplus reserves. Designated funds consist of £2,000 for branding changes, £4,000 for training, £2,000 for laptops, and £15,067 for one year of an additional 1.5 days/week for the Therapeutic Parenting Support Manager.

8. Related Party Transactions

Sophie Guthrie-Kummer, employed as Executive Director, paid Choices Charity £508 in 2023 (2022: £478) as a donation for use of office space.

Donations made by trustees in 2023 totalled £2,380 (2022: £890).